

IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERNET TECHNOLOGIES IN TEACHING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES FOR PROFESSIONAL PURPOSES

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The opportunities borne by the Internet technologies for the improvement of foreign language training (especially in terms of the communicational and professional essence of the foreign language training for special professional purposes) are so broad that hardly any teaching methodology can be deemed complete, if it does not envisage the implementation of Internet and computer technologies as such [3]. Hence, the issue identifying effective didactic and methodological solutions regarding the integration of the information technologies, and the Internet in particular into the student training in foreign languages appears acute.

The present article highlights advantages of and defines prerequisites for the implementation of the Internet technologies into the teaching of foreign languages for special professional purposes. Further, the article sets out some of the practical experience in the application of such technologies in an institution of higher learning with agricultural specialization.

There are several key advantages of the usage of the Internet technologies in the foreign language training that allow to substantially increase the quality of the teaching process [1, 2, 3, 5]:

- Reinforcement of the foreign language training due to the linguistic nature of online communication. For instance, according to some conducted research studies it has been identified that an electronic/ online discussion is more demanding in terms of the lexical and syntactical characteristics than its oral counterpart, and bears a lot of features of linguistic functions. This in turn is very useful in the mastering and the application of a foreign language.

- Provision of the optimal prerequisites for the training in written language due to an authentic audience for the written communication.

- Increase of the learning motivation of students.

- Improvement of students' skills in the Internet usage for their future professional career growth. Note that on the one hand, students need to master the Internet technology usage in order to learn a foreign language; on the other hand however, foreign language learning often inspires students to familiarize themselves with effective techniques in the Internet implementation.

- Extensive choice of virtual educational services (various dictionaries, encyclopedia, search engines, blogs, multimedia courses, web sites and newsletters etc. related to foreign language learning).

- Unique opportunities for cooperation and exchange of experience in the foreign language learning, mitigating the perceived isolation from other agents learning and improving their foreign language skills.

- Facilitation of an environment where teachers' role is decentralized, since students have an opportunity to choose discussion and communication topics on their own.

- Internet is an unlimited source of information, especially in foreign languages. This pertains to linguistic as well as subject-focused information on any topic. This is of particular importance for the foreign language training with professional orientation, since this grants a) effectively unlimited opportunities for teachers to select professional content of the respective foreign language training by means of the compilation of authentic linguistic material; b) opportunities for students to search for the information of interest through Internet search engines – on their own or upon a teacher’s assignment – for further usage in the learning process.

A very important role in the implementation of the Internet technologies pertains to interactivity. Interactivity is the distinguishing feature of the application of the Internet technologies as opposed to reading regular printed texts of linear nature. Interactivity is achieved through: a) means of the material processing chosen by the user based on the usage of hyperlinks, which allows for access to different electronic texts (“hypertexts”) stemming from the source text; b) choice of multimedia tools: allowing for multiple processing of certain audio- and video materials; c) transmittal of one’s own information to the online community, e.g. sending of student’s responses to online exercise; d) search of inquiries or data of own interest and the receipt of the respective information searched [6]. The interactive nature of a number of educational Internet services allows students for feedback – e.g. by means of communicating with a virtual teacher, newsletter authors etc. – which appears very important for those mastering a foreign language independently.

Based on the type of the information receipt synchronized and non-synchronized training systems are distinguished.

Didactical features of information and communication technologies in the foreign language training are defined according to information presentation and information processing means, as well as the means of organization of the training process, control, systematization and reinforcement of training materials [1]. Various research of communicational and linguistic characteristics of information communication means reemphasizes that this kind of communication is a special type of language activity accumulating oral and written language skills [5].

Due to their characteristic didactic features information communication technologies allow to: organize versatile cooperative research work; effectively exchange information, ideas, plans on issues of interest to the relevant communication participants; organize a network of distance learning; develop skills in information search while performing various assignments; publish student papers online; create natural language environment within joint language projects and teleconferences; develop communicational skills and communication culture of the counterparties involved in the communication process; facilitate multicultural development of the agents being trained based on the exposure to a very broad field of information (of professional, academic, cultural, ethnical nature etc.) [4, 3].

When designing a set of practical implementation solutions teachers should account for the respective organizational and resource-related conditions of a rounded training process as well as the respective needs of the student audience in any specific institution of higher learning.

At Tavria State Agrotechnological University – due to a relatively short duration of the training course “Foreign language for professional purposes” (i.e. just two to three semesters in a Bachelor program, and largely just one semester in a

Master's program, with merely two hours a week) – the major focus lies in the implementation of non-synchronized training systems. Internet technologies are used within two types of course work: mandatory course work that is included in the training programs of the relevant major; and extracurricular (non-mandatory) in which students participate upon their discretion.

As a minimum requirement of the Internet technologies usage the mentioned training course work in a relevant foreign language envisages Internet-based search for information (academic, professional or of specialized discipline orientation depending on the training stage) performed twice per semester with the purpose of informational projects, such as public presentation of individual work on current high priority issues related to a respective content module.

Further, as a mandatory component of the training process, foreign language training foresees computer-based testing of students' fundamental entry-level knowledge in all disciplines of Bachelor programs. The objective of such computer-based testing is the preparation of individual recommendations regarding student's weaknesses in the foreign language knowledge base and skills of each individual student or regarding the effective ways to improve student's skills and knowledge of the respective foreign language.

Aside from the mandatory components of the Internet technologies implementation, the methodological base of the Foreign Languages Chair also includes the Internet technologies usage as an additional information source for the purposes of independent extracurricular work and self-education as such. For instance, the University's web site (www.kim-tdata.org.ua) launched in 2009 has substantially contributed to the optimization of the independent learning and cognitive activity of students in the framework of foreign languages training for professional purposes by providing the users of the web site with numerous additional learning material and systematic advice on effective strategic of mastering foreign languages. The latter is achieved by means of informing students of self-assessment tools as well as various resources on independent improvement of foreign language competences online.

For instance, an integrate part of the web site is a learning platform "moodle" offering distance learning courses in German and English languages. The courses consist of a set of interrelated assignments aiming to develop reading comprehension, speaking, writing and listening comprehension skills in the respective foreign language, as well as allowing students for self-regulated mastering of the respective materials offered within the mandatory coursework.

While primarily oriented on the creation of favorable and attractive conditions for active independent student work, their self-improvement and self-development, the web site is also oriented on the popularization of the role and importance of foreign languages among students, as well as involvement of the latter in various training and learning activities offered by the Chair, and the provision of feedback in working with students. Such feedback envisages the information receipt through different surveys and questionnaires, aimed at potential amendments to the content of the training material, adjustments to forms and methods of training, as well as correction of the contents and forms of communication with users of the web site.

To the end of the identification of new educational solutions regarding the realization of the individual creative potential of students and the accumulation of

effective individual experiences regarding the foreign language communication by future agrarian professionals, for the last three years the web site of the Foreign Languages Chair has been offering a student contest on the best essay in English, German or French. Any student of our University can participate in the contest, since the contest regulations and requirements regarding the creative works of students are published on the Chair's web site and provide for online interaction between contest participants and the contest jury panel. Winners' papers (upon students' consent) are published on the web site. As results of the past years show, the contest contributes to the creation of intellectual environment for motivated students regarding the practical implementation of a foreign language, the realization of the students' creative potential, creating incentives for students to improve their foreign language skills.

In summary, it is worth noting that a well-balanced integration of the information technologies into the foreign language training process reinforces the intensification of students' independent work as well as the individualization of the training process by taking into account respective levels of students' foreign language skills, the pace of mastering the latter, timing of the training course, training style, individual educational needs and training dimensions etc.

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